



Fact Sheet 3.2

Zoning Ordinances



Zoning ordinances are created to separate incompatible land uses and they can positively or negatively shape urban and rural development. Natural resource professionals should be familiar with a variety of zoning tools that can help manage natural resources in the wildland-urban interface.

- **Agricultural zoning** separates farming from conflicting non-farm uses to protect a critical mass of farms and farmland from development. It also provides reduced property taxes.
- **Conservation zoning/limited development in environmentally sensitive areas** requires low-density or no development on land that is determined to be environmentally significant or sensitive. These zones help protect greenspace for wildlife habitat, wetlands, and floodplain areas (Myszewski and Kundell 2005).
- **Flexible/mixed-use zoning** encourages mixed residential/commercial development and denser growth in cities. Such zoning creates more opportunities for residents to access work, shopping and entertainment easily without the use of automobiles (Myszewski and Kundell 2005).
- **Floating zones** are districts that are not designated on the city's zoning map until a developer or landowner applies for a specific designation. An applicant must demonstrate that the project's effects on the surrounding area will be appropriately managed for that environment (Juergensmeyer and Roberts 1998).
- **Forestry zoning** separates forestry from conflicting nonforestry land uses to protect a critical mass of commercial timberland from development. It also enables a reduction in property taxes.
- **Incentive zones** provide significant waivers of zoning requirements to developers who agree to build according to specific guidelines. For example, developers often may provide public infrastructure or amenities such as parks, affordable housing, or rooftop observatories in exchange for more lenient zoning requirements (Myszewski and Kundell 2005).
- **Maximum/minimum lot sizes** regulate the density of development in order to protect rural land uses and rural character or create conservation areas in subdivisions (Juergensmeyer and Roberts 1998).
- **Open space/cluster zoning** concentrates buildings on part of a property while maintaining greenspace and wildlife habitat (Myszewski and Kundell 2005).
- **Overlay zoning** enables a municipality to promote or discourage development in certain areas by supplementing underlying zoning standards with additional requirements that can be designed to protect natural resources. Overlay zoning districts can be positioned "over" the standard zoning for an area in order to customize some of the regulations for that specific area (Myszewski and Kundell 2005, Juergensmeyer and Roberts 1998). For example, overlay zoning may be used to protect historic districts or create greenways.

- **Performance zoning** regulates land uses based on adherence to predetermined criteria, while still allowing for a wide variety of land uses. Impervious surface ratio (ISR) standards are one type of performance zoning. They aim to improve storm-water drainage and protect water quality by specifying how much of a site may be covered with impervious surfaces (Myszewski and Kundell 2005).
- **Planned unit development (PUD)** permits the unified development of entire neighborhoods based on approved plans, which may or may not correspond to the regulations of that particular zoning district. PUDs can promote developer creativity and more efficient use of open space (Myszewski and Kundell 2005, Juergensmeyer and Roberts 1998). A condominium is an example of a PUD.
- **Rural residential zoning** provides an area for nonfarm and nonforestry housing in the countryside, promoting rural community stability without interfering with farm and forestry operations (Daniels 1999).
- **Steep-slope zoning** prohibits construction on steep slopes in order to protect public health and safety, reduce soil erosion, prevent mudslides, reduce storm-water and septic runoff, and preserve views (Daniels 1999).

Urban Interface.” In *Forests at the Wildland-Urban Interface: Conservation and Management*, Eds. S. W. Vince, M. L. Duryea, E. A. Macie, and L. A. Hermansen, 77-94. Boca Raton FL: CRC Press.

References

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- Juergensmeyer, J. and T. Roberts. 1998. *Land Use Planning and Control Law*. St. Paul MN: WestGroup.
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